

Press Release  
For immediate release  
Friday, September 23, 2011

**Bastrop Community Cleanup Efforts to Move into Overdrive—  
Judge Ronnie McDonald Announces  
FEMA Approval of Public Assistance Declaration**

“For nearly three weeks Bastrop community members have been helping family and friends clear tons of debris left by the wildfires. FEMA’s approval of the county’s request for Public Assistance Declaration now moves those efforts into overdrive with access to resources such as the heavy machinery necessary to remove the overwhelming amount of ash and refuse,” Judge Ronnie McDonald said.

On Tuesday, September 21, Bastrop County officials were notified of the approval.

“We can now focus cleanup efforts on areas of the county that suffered mass destruction and are uninhabitable, and on increasing roadway safety with the removal of standing burned trees that could topple onto drivers at any time,” Precinct Two Commissioner Clara Beckett said.

“News of the Public Assistance approval is a huge relief for the county, and especially for the Tahitian Village community,” Precinct One Commissioner William Piña said. “Now, residents of one of the hardest hit neighborhoods have the county’s assurance that they will have safe access to their homesteads as they clear the land and rebuild.”

“As Bastrop County Residents develop their home recovery plans, I urge homeowners to consider hiring only reputable contractors and homebuilders,” McDonald said.

“One of the best measures of accountability is hiring local. Dozens of locally owned businesses, specializing in these professions, are members of the Bastrop, Smithville or Elgin Chambers of Commerce and listed on their websites.

“Just as the whole county was devastated by the fires, the whole county can benefit from the recovery process by supporting local businesses as much as possible,” said McDonald.

The Chamber sites are located at: <http://bastropchamber.com/index.asp>; <http://www.smithvilletx.org> and <http://www.elgintx.com/chamber.ASP>.

Commissioner Beckett, who is coordinating debris management efforts, advised Residents who have already begun the clearing process to request debris disposal receipts from contractors and to recycle refuse, when possible, to keep removal costs low. Household debris management resources and recycling and other disposal locations are listed on the Bastrop County website at: <http://www.co.bastrop.tx.us/bcdisaster/>

“Bastrop County will have zero tolerance for illegal dumping,” Beckett said.

“The recovery and rebuilding process is going to take time, patience, and the same team commitment that got us through the wildfires,” McDonald said. “We have the foundation it takes to be successful— residents’ good will and Public Assistance resources. We are well on our way to restoring our community.”

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